

Madame Chair & members of the committee, my name is Becky Stockton & I reside in Helena, MT.

I come before you today as an opponent to HB 200. As a Chief Election judge for the Lewis & Clark County for about 20 years, I am concerned with Section 2, 13-4-107, (2) (4), lines 7-8 on page 2, Section 3, 13-13-225, (3) (b), line 23 on page 2 & Section 4, 13-13-241, (7) (b), lines 28-29 on page 3. Since I am a precinct committeewoman of a party central committee & a Chief Election judge, I would not be able to perform my duties as a judge if this bill becomes law. In Helena, (I can not say if this happens anywhere else in Montana or with other party central committees), there are many in our central committee who are proud to service as an election judge and would like to continue. I, for one, think that it is our patriot duty to serve in this position and I take my job very seriously in protecting & defending everyone, that includes whether you are a member of the Democratic, Republican, Independent, Green, Constitution, etc, party, their right to vote. I can say without a doubt, that every one of my judges is non-partisan when running the election & are very professional. We do not let our political affiliations get in the way of running the election. It is required in law, 13-4-102, (3) Each board of election judges must include judges representing all parties that have submitted lists as provided in subsection (1). No more than the number of election judges needed to obtain a simple majority may be appointed from the list of one political party in each precinct. If any of the political parties entitled to do so fail to submit a list meeting the requirements of this section, the governing body shall, to the extent possible, appoint judges so that all parties eligible to participate in the primary are represented on each board.

If you pass this bill, it will eliminate many judges that the county election office pulls from their pool of judges to run the polls & the absentee ballot board. We are short many times for judges, so this would put a great hardship on the local county election offices to fill the requirements of staffing the polls. If the sponsor is looking, for non-partisan judges, well good luck; every voter is partisan! As to a campaign worker or an officer of a political party, I would say it is mute. Most of these workers will be working hard to GOTV & would not have time to serve as an election judge.

As to Section 6, 13-13-211, (2), which is located on page 4, line 19-26, initially I was a supporter of this section until I remembered that I buy candy to give to the children who come with their parents to vote & of course some adult voters want a piece of candy too. As a group of election judges, we bring food to share with each other, which some & sometimes all the judges are also registered voters in my precinct. So I, & any of my judges would be in violation of this section of the law too. Voting at the polls is a social event for us.

The problem stems from the consolidation of the polls where same-day registering is occurring, like at the Metra in Billings, Civic Center in Great Falls, Fairgrounds in Missoula, Fairgrounds in Kalispell or the County Election offices. This is not occurring at the general precinct polls because we do not do same-day registering. Would the sponsor be receptive to a friendly amendment to exclude the general precinct polls & only specify the prohibition to include only those areas where same-day registering is occurring & keep the language about the prohibition within 100 feet of any entrance to the building in the polling place is located in the bill?

I would like to point out; I am in support of New Section, Section One of the bill. There were individuals around the state of Montana going to absentee voter homes collecting their ballots. There was an employee at my husband's office, which informed him that she had someone come to her door to pick up her absentee ballot & said, "No way!" It would be very easy for individuals & groups to affect the outcome of an election by throwing ballots away if they knew your party affiliation or your stance on a ballot issue. Only you & a certified election officials should be handling your ballot!

As the bill currently stands, I can't be in support of HB 200.
If this bill were to pass, would it include the public school elections?